

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6030

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 01702

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: THE UDR ONE MONTH AFTER CHIRAC'S TAKEOVER

REF: PARIS 30302 (DECEMBER 17)

SUMMARY. USING THE POWERS OF THE MATIGNON TO THE FULLEST, JACQUES CHIRAC IN ONLY ONE MONTH AS UDR SECRETARY GENERAL HAS GONE FAR TOWARD CONSOLIDATING HIS LEADERSHIP OVER THE PARTY AND HAS BEGUN TO REVITALIZE THE GAULLIST MOVEMENT. WITH SOCIALIST/COMMUNIST QUARRELS WEAKENING THE UNITED LEFT, WITH THE CENTRISTS UNABLE TO FORM A COHESIVE MOVEMENT, AND WITH THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS DORMANT -- THE UDR IS SHOWING UNEXPECTED DYNAMISM UNDER ITS NEW LEADERSHIP. WHILE THE UDR HAS NOT YET TOTALLY REGAINED ITS HEALTH, CHIRAC'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION HAS ENDED THE GAULLIST MALAISE AND THE PARTY'S DEFECTIONS. IT NOW APPEARS THAT CHIRAC'S "INTERIM" SECRETARY-GENERALSHIP WILL CONTINUE AT LEAST UNTIL THE GAULLIST CONVENTION TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR

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MAY OR JUNE -- AND PERHAPS WELL BEYOND. END SUMMARY.

1. A MONTH AFTER HIS TAKEOVER OF THE UDR (REFTEL), PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC'S POSITION AS LEADER OF THE GAULLIST MOVEMENT IS STRONGER THAN EVER. ALTHOUGH THERE IS OPPOSITION TO THE PRIME MINISTER WITHIN THE MOVEMENT, IT HAS NOT COALESCED AROUND A SINGLE LEADER; CHIRAC HAS THE CLEAR SUPPORT OF MORE THAN THREE-FOURTHS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. THE GROUP OF THIRTY-FOUR "ANTI-CHIRAC" UDR DEPUTIES, WHICH ASSEMBLED BRIEFLY AFTER CHIRAC'S DECEMBER 14 ELECTION, HAS -- AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING -- LOST ITS MOMENTUM.

2. UNLIKE THE UDR'S NEW LEADER, THE "BARONS" ARE TIRED. OLIVIER GUICHARD, WHO STOOD TO LOSE THE MOST FROM CHIRAC'S SELF-ANOINTING, APPEARS TO HAVE GIVEN UP ANY THOUGHT OF ACTIVE OPPOSITION. ON JANUARY 16, GUICHARD EVEN LET IT BE KNOWN THAT CHIRAC'S SECRETARY-GENERALSHIP MIGHT NOT BE A BAD THING FOR THE SHORT RUN, ALTHOUGH HE MADE CLEAR HIS OPPOSITION TO CHIRAC'S STAYING ON AS PARTY LEADER. FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL SANGUINETTI HAS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT CHIRAC WILL REMAIN PARTY HEAD FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. EX-PRIME MINISTER MESSMER, ANOTHER "BARON" THOUGH NEVER ACTIVELY ANTI-CHIRAC, IS BEING RUMORED AS A POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT FOR DEFENSE MINISTER SOUFFLET. UNABLE FOR THE TIME BEING TO OUST CHIRAC FROM THE UDR LEADERSHIP POSITION, THE "BARONS" ARE CONTENTING THEMSELVES WITH A VIGILANT NEUTRALITY.

3. THE UPTURN IN THE UDR'S FORTUNES COINCIDES WITH A LOSS IN POLITICAL INFLUENCE BY THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT COALITION, AND COMES IN THE MIDST OF A SERIOUS QUARREL BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND THEIR SOCIALIST PARTNERS WHICH HAS SAPPED SOME OF THE UNITED LEFT'S VITALITY. SINCE GISCARD'S ELECTION, HIS OWN INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN (IR) MOVEMENT HAS NOTABLY FAILED TO BROADEN ITS BASE. MOST OF ITS LEADERS -- PONIATOWSKI, BONNET, D'ORNANO, SOISSON -- NOW OCCUPY CABINET POSTS AND HAVE HAD LITTLE TIME FOR PARTY ACTIVITY. DESPITE IR SECRETARY GENERAL CHINAUD'S RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT

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HIS GROUP INTENDS TO BECOME THE PREPONDERANT FORCE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY, THE MOVEMENT REMAINS INEFFECTUAL AND DORMANT. APART FROM THE LEADERSHIP NOW IN GOVERNMENT, THE IR'S IMAGE REMAINS ONE OF CONSERVATIVE ARISTOCRACY WITH NO SIGNIFICANT POPULAR ROOTS. THE IR WILL HAVE TO SEARCH FOR A MEANS TO REGAIN SOME INITIATIVE AS ITS MEMBERS APPROACH THEIR PARTY CONGRESS, TO BE HELD IN PARIS AT MONTH'S END. TWO RUMORS IN THIS

CONNECTION ARE OF SPECIAL INTEREST: FIRST, THE POSSIBILITY THAT PONIATOWSKI WILL BE ELECTED IR PRESIDENT; AND SECOND, THAT CHIRAC HAS CONVEYED HIS WISH TO ADDRESS THE IR CONGRESS.

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6031

INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 01702

4. MEANWHILE THE CENTRISTS CONTINUE TO SQUABBLE AMONG THEMSELVES, APPARENTLY UNABLE TO SUBMERGE THEIR VARIOUS PERSONALITIES AND FORM A COHERENT MOVEMENT. OVER THREE MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE RADICAL SOCIALIST AND REFORMER PARTY ASSOCIATED WITH CONSIDERABLE FANFARE, JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER, FRANCOISE GIROUD, LABOR MINISTER DURAFOUR AND OTHERS. LITTLE HAS HAPPENED' HOWEVER, AND THE GROUP HAS NOT YET PRODUCED ANY CONCRETE PROGRAMMATIC SUGGESTIONS. DURAFOUR AND GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ROSSI -- ACTING WE ARE TOLD IN RESPONSE TO SUGGESTIONS FROM GISCARD -- HAVE

NOW ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO CONSTRUCT A "LEFT REFORMER" GROUPING. THEY HAVE APPARENTLY GIVEN UP HOPE THAT JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER, THAT ETERNAL GADFLY, CAN EVER WORK IN TANDEM WITH OTHERS IN PURSUIT OF INTERESTS LARGER THAN HIS OWN. THIS "LEFT REFORMER" GROUP WILL SEEK TO ATTRACT SOCIALISTS NOW IN THE
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OPPOSITION WHILE EXCLUDING THEIR ERSTWHILE REFORMER COLLEAGUES, LECANUET'S CENTER DEMOCRATS. THIS TACTIC IS MORE LIKELY TO DIVIDE FURTHER RATHER THAN UNIFY THE ALREADY FRAGMENTED CENTER RANKS.

5. THE SIBYLLINE MICHEL JOBERT HAS BEEN LESS IN EVIDENCE DURING THE PAST MONTH. REGARDING CHIRAC'S TAKEOVER, THE FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER HAS LIMITED HIMSELF TO A FEW COMMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE UDR MAY BE MANY THINGS UNDER CHIRAC, BUT IT IS NO LONGER GAULLIST. JOBERT'S COLLABORATORS PROFESS SERENE DISINTEREST IN CHIRAC'S MOVES. IF SO, THEY ARE ABOUT THE ONLY POLITICAL OBSERVERS IN TOWN WHO DO NOT CONSIDER A REVITALIZED UDR AS POSING A SERIOUS -- PERHAPS FATAL-- THREAT TO JOBERT'S POLITICAL FUTURE, SINCE JOBERT HAS DEPENDED LARGELY ON DISAFFECTED GAULLISTS FOR HIS SUPPORT AND HIS HOPES OF FUTURE PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION.

6. CHIRAC IS OFF TO A FAST START, WELL AWARE THAT IN POLITICS, ESPECIALLY FRENCH POLITICS, SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS. LIKE A PHOENIX, THE UDR UNDER CHIRAC IS BEGINNING TO RISE FROM ITS POLITICAL DEBRIS; OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS THE UDR HAS ATTRACTED MORE NEW MEMBERSHIP INSCRIPTIONS AND FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE POMPIDOU'S DEATH. THE NEW SECRETARY GENERAL HAS SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH FIVE PERSONALLY LOYAL DEPUTY SECRETARIES-GENERAL; OF THESE, ALBIN CHALANDON IS RAPIDLY EMERGING AS FIRST AMONG EQUALS (CHALANDON HAS EVEN BEEN HEARD TO CALL HIMSELF "CHIRAC'S PONIATOWSKI"). CHALANDON'S CHOICE OF WORDS IS SIGNIFICANT. OVER THE PAST MONTH, CHIRAC HAS RISEN TO PONIATOWSKI'S LEVEL IN TERMS OF NATIONAL PRESTIGE AND GOVERNMENTAL INFLUENCE.

7. TO TRANSFORM THE GAULLIST MOVEMENT, CHIRAC'S CALENDAR CALLS FOR REELECTION OF KEY UDR CADRES, PRESIDENTS OF FEDERATIONS, SECRETARIES OF CIRCONSCRIPTIONS AND DELEGATES TO NATIONAL COMMITTEES -- ALL BEFORE FEBRUARY 2, WHEN THE NEW CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL MEET TO SET THE DATE AND DECIDE THE AGENDA FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL SESSION. THIS WILL PROBABLY BE HELD FEBRUARY 22-23, THE DATES ORIGINALLY DESIGNATED FOR THE NATIONAL
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CONVENTION (ASSIZES). AT THAT MEETING, CHIRAC MAY
ATTEMPT TO HAVE HIMSELF REELECTED SECRETARY GENERAL
UNDER THE FIRST TEST OF THE UDR'S NEW, LESS RESTRICTIVE
VOTING RULES.

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 PARIS 01702

8. A FURTHER PRESIDENTIALIZATION OF THE REGIME? AS
THE FRENCH CONSTITUTION IS USUALLY INTERPRETED, THERE
ARE TWO MEN ABOVE POLITICAL PARTIES: THE PRESIDENT,
WHO REPRESENTS THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, AND THE PRIME MINIS-
TER, WHO REPRESENTS THE MAJORITY. THE PRIME MINISTER, TO
FULFILL HIS ROLE, MUST AVOID OFFICIALLY ASSUMING DIRECT

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE OF THE POLITICAL FORMATIONS.
IF HE BECOMES THE LEADER OF ONE PARTY, AS CHIRAC HAS
DONE, HIS ROLE AS CHIEF OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT IS
BOUND TO BE WEAKENED. ANY SLACK IN THIS AREA CAN ONLY
BE TAKEN UP BY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF -- WHO THUS
ASSUMES A PORTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S POLITICAL
ROLE VIS-A-VIS THE MAJORITY. IF CHIRAC REMAINS UDR
SECRETARY GENERAL INDEFINITELY, THIS COULD WORK TOWARD
A MORE "PRESIDENTIAL" REGIME.

9. WILL CHIRAC'S POLITICAL ROLE LEAD TO A DIRECT
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CLASH WITH GISCARD? WE DOUBT IT IN THE SHORT RUN,
ALTHOUGH IN THE LONG RUN ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE. FOR
THE TIME BEING THE TWO MEN -- SIMILAR IN TEMPERAMENT
AND POLITICAL OUTLOOK, BOTH PRAGMATIC AND DISTRUSTFUL OF
DOGMA -- KNOW THAT THEY NEED EACH OTHER. GISCARD IS
PRESIDENT UNTIL 1981 AND CHIRAC, ONLY 42, CAN WELL
AFFORD TO BIDE HIS TIME.
RUSH

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